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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRAGUE 001006

SIPDIS

FOR EUR/ERA, DRL AND CUBA DESK

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/28/2015

TAGS: PREL EU EZ CU

SUBJECT: IN-DEPTH READOUT OF EU'S CUBA COMPROMISE

Classified By: Political Officer Kimberly C. Krhounek for reasons 1.4(b) ) and (d).

**11.** (C) Following the June 13 GAERC on Cuba, Post received a comprehensive record of the internal EU discussion in a document given to us by our interlocutors at the MFA. This document is the Czechs' written record of what transpired at the meeting. We have translated it and are sending it to Washington as a valuable insight into internal EU negotiations on this sensitive issue. Please STRICTLY PROTECT this information. It appears clear from the review that the Czechs had little beyond rhetorical support from a few countries in their efforts to create a stronger text conclusions, advocate benchmarks for progress and place an increased focus on human rights rather than economic benefits and trade. In the end, the EU's desire for a common position dominated the debate more than events in Cuba itself. Below follows the basic summary of the positions advocated by the various representatives of the participating EU member states and how the final conclusion on Cuba was brokered:

**1A.** (C) EU PRESIDENCY: The Luxembourg Presidency opened the meeting by noting that the draft text circulated for discussion on Cuba reflected the compromise reached by all EU member states, with the exception of the Czech proposal to limit all high-level EU visits to Cuba to foreign ministers, with other ministries represented only at lower working levels. The EU Presidency observed that Luxembourg, as a country with a small administrative structure, did not understand why problems of human rights could not be mentioned by other visiting ministers such as ministers of transportation or environment:

**1B.** (C) CZECH REPUBLIC: The Czech representative said that it is difficult at this time to formulate a final position in light of the fact that there had been no change in the human rights situation and no more political prisoners had been released. The Czech side respected the EU's need to reach a common position and understood the necessity to cooperate on economic measures, but nonetheless warned that it was unclear how many ministers during their visits actually addressed the issue of human rights. For this reason, the Czechs proposed that economic dialogue take place only at lower working levels. The Cuban regime has refused to allow visits by high level Czech officials. The Czechs requested solidarity from other member states on the issue of high-level visits, noting that the Czech Deputy FM who was planning to visit Cuba in accordance with the January conclusions to discuss human rights issues was denied a Cuban visa. The Czech representative assumed all the EU member states share the same common principles and values about the importance of protecting human rights. The Czech side does not want to go against the common position; however it stands by its proposal to limit high-level visits to foreign ministers.

**1C.** (C) SPAIN (M. Moratinos): The Spanish representative considered it a success that the EU was able to speak with a single voice on such a sensitive issue. He averred that during this discussion reviewing the January conclusions, it was necessary to compare the situation now with relations as they were after the June measures of 2003, when relations between the EU and the Cuban government were at their lowest point. No structured dialogue existed, the EU had not achieved the release of any prisoners and no meetings with the opposition were allowed by the government. The EU had reached a blind alley, a total blockade, from which only the most hard-line proponents of the regime gained a benefit. Thanks to the new position taken in January of this year, the EU Ambassadors had taken the lead on both dialogue with the Cuban government as well as structured dialogue with the opposition; they had achieved the release of 2 important political prisoners from the group of 75 and they are attending organized meetings with the opposition. Spain maintains the common position of the EU while at the same time it does not invite government officials to celebrations of its national day. Another step with significant effect was Spanish co-sponsorship of the EU resolution on Cuba in the Human Rights Commission. The goal of all of these activities is to apply continuous pressure on the Cuban government so that it will realize that its policies are not sustainable and that sooner or later it must make changes. The January measures introduced a convenient mechanism to maintain this pressure. He insisted that Spain is the first

to condemn the expulsion of European observers and understands the problem that the Czech Republic has with the refusal of the Deputy Foreign Minister's visit. That is why Spain offered the following compromise text: "... on a reciprocal and non-discriminatory basis, including the issuance of visas to members of the respective governments for official visits." Spain also hinted that the Cuban Foreign Minister informed Moratinos that in case they can maintain a significant dialogue, the Cuban government in the near future will be prepared to offer the EU a political dialogue on democracy and human rights which would cover releasing political prisoners and changes in the area of human rights. However, Spain was not able to share more about this proposal at this time.

**D. (C) GERMANY (Joschka Fischer):** Germany said that it fully shared the critical position of the Czech Republic towards Cuba. When reviewing the January conclusions, it is important to keep in mind what was expected and promised at the time when the EU suspended the June 2003 measures. It was expected that the Cuban government would release 75 political prisoners and improve the situation in the area of human rights. The subsequent results were however very small and one must draw from this the necessary conclusions. According to Germany, the text of the conclusions released from the GAERC must be much more firm. Dialogue should be first focused on the accomplishment of tangible results in the areas of human rights, democracy and freeing of political prisoners and only then on the areas of politics and economics. Germany proposed the following amendment to the draft text, " maintain a dialogue...with the Cuban authorities." The problem of human rights must be addressed in harmony with the proposal of the Czech Republic for on-going discussion during all high level visits. The position of the EU on the question of human rights must be formulated clearly and its member states must maintain solidarity. A different policy would lead to the stabilization of the Cuban regime. Germany does not see any concrete results which have occurred since January and that's why it can only agree with the offered text with difficulty and only in the interest of achieving a common position.

**E. (C) EUROPEAN COMMISSION (Ferrero-Waldner):** The EC representative expressed support for the European Presidency in searching for a common position; it is necessary that the EU show that it is capable of reaching agreement on sensitive questions and create the foundation for a successful transition to democracy in Cuba. A change of position is not simple even for the Cubans. The goal of the EU should be connected to dialogue in the right direction. The solution is for every minister during his/her visits to Cuba to bring up the issue of human rights. According to the EC, it is not a solution to isolate Cuba.

**F. (C) PORTUGAL (do Amaral):** Portugal expressed agreement with the European Commission and synthesized the positions of Germany and Spain, saying that isolation and the U.S. embargo do not promote change, but rather they strengthen the Castro regime and allow its continued survival. According to Portugal, the EU has achieved the first small advancements (the meeting with opposition) and this door should remain open.

**G. (C) SLOVAKIA (Kukan):** Slovakia emphasized that the EU must speak with a single voice. Consensus within the framework of the EU is necessary, because Cuba takes advantage of differences in the positions of the member states in order to divide them. It is necessary to use every opportunity to speak with Cuban institutions about human rights. Slovakia did not agree with the opinion of the European Commission. The Cuban government is not seizing the opportunities offered to it. The EU must ask the question how many additional opportunities we should give to the Cuban government. Slovakia proposed that before the EU reaches any further conclusions on Cuba, it should prepare a document evaluating progress. The Slovak representative agreed with the Czech Republic and Germany that the most important question from the point of view of the EU is that of human rights. The EU must maintain a realistic view on the situation there, right now it is not possible to say that developments in Cuba encourage optimism.

**I. (C) CYPRUS (Iacovou):** Cyprus believed that it is necessary to find consensus and expressed agreement with Spain and the EC. According to Cyprus, the message of the EU towards Cuba comprehends that the regime has survived for many years through heroic means thanks to the American embargo. In reaction to the Czech proposal, Cyprus does not understand why questions of human rights cannot be raised during the visit of other officials during their visits, such as Ministers of Justice. It would be an unnecessary limitation, artificially created, which doesn't reflect the reality that in each member state there are different administrative structures and different ways of dividing up the human rights portfolio.

**1J. (C) SWEDEN** (Freivalds): Sweden shared the opinions of the EC and Spain, but also at the same time the fears of Germany as the Cuban regime has not fulfilled its promises. Therefore it is necessary to have a focused dialogue about human rights.

**1K. (C) FRANCE** (Douce-Blazy): It is a priority to hold to a common position and that is why in this phase it considers it most sensible to continue in the already established dialogue with the Cuban government and Cuban opposition, even though there is no visible progress at this time.

**1L. (C) POLAND** (Rotfeld): Poland agreed with the opinions of Germany and Sweden that it is necessary to have a focused dialogue and to preserve the common position. In the opposite case, the Cubans would take it as a sign of disunity in the EU.

**1M. (C) DENMARK** (Moller): Denmark agreed with the opinion of Germany that it is necessary to change the text and to strengthen it. The EU cannot maintain a double standard on human rights (for example in comparison with relations with China). Denmark also agreed with the opinion of the Czech Republic that it is not possible to have consensus without solidarity. The EU must clearly express that it takes the protection of human rights very seriously.

**1N. (C) BELGIUM**: Belgium agreed with the same interests expressed -- in the struggle for human rights. However, it is necessary to agree to a single position. According to Belgium it is necessary to continue with the current direction (ie, pressure on the Cuban government). So far, too short a period of time has passed to allow for judging actual results. At this time, Belgium does not see any other alternative.

**1O. (C) GREECE**: Greece adheres to the consensus position and stated that the policy of the EU must be a policy of rapprochement and dialogue with the goal of convincing the Cuban government that improving in the area of human rights is unavoidable. EU intervention must be efficient, effective and also flexible.

**1P. (C) CZECH REPUBLIC**: The Czech Republic agreed that after hearing all of the opinions expressed, it is necessary to strengthen the wording of the text describing the measures towards Cuba as the Germans proposed. In the spirit of finding consensus, the Czech Republic would withdraw its original proposal, but at the same time expressed deep disappointment about the current position of the EU on the question of human rights. As an illustration of how Cuba perceives the EU, the Czech representative recalled that Cuba labelled the EU a political, moral and ethical dwarf. In this connection the Czech Republic mentioned the question of participation at national day receptions. The mission of the Czech Republic in Havana is permanently discriminated against and the Czechs feel little support from the EU on this matter. It remains an open question of what to do in the case that some EU ministers avoid a discussion of human rights during their visits.

**1Q. (C)** The GAERC approved the proposed text of Germany and Spain in forming the final conclusion.

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